

I agree with the FISTS petition to keep Morse Code within the Amateur Radio

Service. My views are based upon 37 years experience as both an Amateur and professional radio operator, radio technician, digital technician and manager with both the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) and the Department of State (DOS).

Amateur Radio is a splendid self training resource for those who constantly improve their technical and operational skills. Without the self motivation which is the product of high standards, the Amateur Service would never have developed its unique 'culture' of self training and advancement.

My only training for a long career with the DOS as a radio and computer technician

was the experience gained building and repairing Amateur Radio equipment. If Morse Code had not been my primary interest, the building of initial radiotelephone projects would have been too daunting for a beginner with little knowledge and no test equipment. It was not the ease of Amateur Radio which initially enticed me, it was the difficulty.

Seven years spent as a paid technician/operator at the ARRL headquarters station

W1AW sending code practice and bulletins, has shown me that a knowledge of

even high speed Morse Code does not hinder accessibility. Given support by the

ARRL and highly qualified mentors, nothing is impossible for someone aspiring to be a really savvy Amateur. However, it is imperative that the FCC keep both technical and

Operational standards very high, as they guarantee retention of our unique culture and will serve to draw individuals to the Amateur Radio. I don't think you can separate technical and Morse proficiency, as they both have a role in bonding an elite band of

Individuals in a complex technical and social nexus. The question is not whether proficiency in Morse is a necessity in the modern age, but what soft of initiation rites can produce individuals dedicated to self improvement.

I have even used Morse Code on a few of my overseas assignments with DOS while testing embassy HF radio systems. However, as the DOS has moved most of its

Communications activities to satellite and common carrier, trained radio and Morse operators have become something of a rare species. The Amateur Radio Service

has become the primary reservoir for such talent during times of national emergency.

I agree with the FISTS petition on most points. However, the question arises how new Technician and General operators can increase their Morse skills. They may be daunted by the high speed contesters and award hunters who congregate on the bottom 50 KHz of most Amateur bands. In the past, the Novice segments fulfilled the function as a sort of Morse way-station. Now a 25 KHz segment dedicated to low speed Morse operations is needed on one or more of the HF bands. It should be kept clear of the digital modes, as an interference free environment is often required by new operators.